

ERPI Small Grants Competition 2017-18 Winners

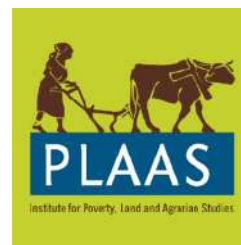


The Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (ERPI) is a new initiative focused on understanding the contemporary moment and building alternatives. New exclusionary politics are generating deepening inequalities, jobless 'growth', climate chaos, and social division. The ERPI is focused on the social and political processes in rural spaces that are generating alternatives to regressive, authoritarian politics. We aim to

provoke debate and action among scholars, activists, practitioners and policymakers from across the world that are concerned about the current situation, and hopeful about alternatives.

For more information see: <http://www.iss.nl/erpi> or email: emancipatoryruralpolitics@gmail.com

Collaborating Organizations



Cornell University
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

1) **Authors:** A Maria A Kastrinou, Salman Fakher Al-deen and Steven Emery

Title: Autochthony as politics: Resistance, land and landscape in the Occupied Syrian Golan Heights

Abstract:

Whereas authoritarian discourses, Israeli propaganda and imperialist interventions in the Middle East have mobilised sectarian identity rhetorics to explain conflict and divide populations, the stateless Syrian Druze population in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights have eschewed the use of any sectarian identity politics in their 50-year struggle. Could the struggle against Israeli occupation within this rural vantage on the Middle East offer new insights into the emancipatory potential of agrarian and land-based political movements? Occupied by Israel since 1967, the Syrian population that withstood displacement and dispossession are predominantly Druze — an esoteric, endogamous, and non-proselytising religious community indigenous to Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel. Building on long-term ethnographic research, we probe the political potential of the local Druze belief in autochthony, as sustained and elaborated through notions of reincarnation (called taqammous): they are of, and from, the land and to their land they return. Uniquely, and perhaps on account of this belief, the Druze villagers chose to remain Stateless in the Golan Heights rather than crossing into Syria or accepting Israeli citizenship as other religious groups have done. Specifically, we argue that the Syrian Druze have translated this religious value in autochthony into a political one and seek to illustrate how the Druze mobilise the land politically through their discourse and in their resistance to Israeli occupation. Moreover, we seek to explore how the Druze, in spite of the restrictions imposed on agricultural practices, maintain their intimate connection with the land through food production and other political, cultural, and creative means. Stateless, the rural population of the Golan Heights have propagated a national liberational discourse underlain and rooted in their territorial connectivity with the land. As well as drawing attention to the current conjecture in the Golan Heights, and by extension to the war in Syria, we hope that the lessons from this example will be of wider relevance to rural struggles not only in the Middle East but also around the world where territory and nation have been perverted by authoritarianism, populism and vulgar nationalism.

Biographies:



Maria Kastrinou is a political anthropologist specialising in Druze culture and politics in the Middle East, and, in particular, sectarianism, nationalism, and the political economy of resistance. She has extensive field-work experience working with Druze communities in Syria, Lebanon, the Golan Heights, and in Israel since 2008. Maria recently published *Power, sect and state in Syria: The politics of marriage and identity among the Druze* (IB Tauris, 2016). Since 2015, she has been working on statelessness and resistance in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, where she has conducted ethnographic research.

Salman Fakher Al-deen, Co-Founder and Field Researcher, Al-Marsad, Golan Heights Salman Fakher Al Deen is a human rights activist and one of Al-Marsad's founders. Al-Marsad is the Arab Human Rights Centre in the Golan Heights. It was established in 2003 and has since sought to document human rights violations perpetrated by Israel (the occupying power) against civilians and their private property. The Centre has become a fundamental reference source for those seeking information on human rights violations in the Occupied Syrian Golan. Since 2008, Salman has been working as a field researcher and as head of Al Marsad's human rights field tour program.

Steven Emery, Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Birmingham, UK Steven Emery is a lecturer at the University of Birmingham specializing in Rural and Environmental Geography. He has researched and written extensively on the prospects and politics of agricultural cooperation within the context of Food Sovereignty and struggles for autonomy. He has also conducted research in rural England exploring the politics of landscape and how the land is mobilised and contested over as a political resource by a range of stakeholders.



2) **Author:** Abdul Rahman

Title: Exploring Gafatar as a Counter Movement to Authoritarian Populism

Abstract:

In early 2016, 8,000 people from the Fajar Nusantara Movement (Gafatar), were forcibly removed from several locations in Kalimantan, Indonesia. It was organised by the State, involving the military, police, and social ministries. Their settlements were burned by the masses, their fields and plants were destroyed. There were two key allegations made against Gafatar which led to this incident. The first was that the group was planning an attack against the Republic of Indonesia and the second was that they had been practicing religious teachings that deviated from the mainstream. In March 2017, three leaders of Gafatar were found guilty by Court of blasphemy and sentenced to imprisonment. They were found not guilty of treason. What has been under-reported in this case, however, are the origins of why 8,000 members of Gafatar moved to Kalimantan in the first place. After declaring they would help the State out of food dependency by organising in small groups, owning and farming land in rural areas, in a very short period of time 8,000 Gafatar members moved to Kalimantan in an attempt to build a form of self-sustaining agriculture. The size of the group and the speed with which they relocated was extraordinary, and may have been considered threatening. This research will further explore the opposing perspectives behind this incident, by attempting to answer three questions. First, can Gafatar be identified as a counter movement to the commodification of food and rural life? Secondly, why is Gafatar considered and framed under the allegations of false religious practices and treason by State and society? Lastly, what were the conditions under which Gafatar members were recruited and joined the organisation? It is hoped that by answering these questions we can better understand this as an alternative local political movement.

Biography:



Abdul Rahman completed Bachelor of Political Science from Andalas University, Indonesia in 2007. Spent four years working with an NGO as a field facilitator and researcher for an indigenous development program in Jambi, Indonesia (2007-2011). Worked as a researcher and independent consultant for government and non-government institutions in Indonesia on community development programs (2011-2014). Volunteered as a researcher for Land Law Development Program in Timor-Leste (2015). Since 2016 have been undertaking a Masters Program in the Department of Anthropology at Gadjah Mada University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

3) **Authors:** Ahilan Kadirgamar and Niyanthini Kadirgamar

Title: Resistance to Post-war Neoliberal Reconstruction and Nationalist Politics in Sri Lanka

Abstract:

Devastated by a two and a half decade long civil war, the war-torn people of Sri Lanka, faced tremendous loss of life, multiple bouts of displacement, disruption of livelihoods and debilitation of social institutions, and were for the most part cut-off from the national market and the global economy. After the war in May 2009, these regions were rapidly integrated into the national economy and subjected to neoliberal policies imposed on the rest of the country for decades. While reconstruction under a militarized regime focused on infrastructure buildout, the lack of state policies to generate incomes and jobs along with the proliferation of loans for self-employment including microfinance schemes, greatly indebted the population. The economic crisis in the war-torn regions with the depletion of assets are aggravating the political frustrations of the people. This paper focuses on the politics of struggles by the war-torn people after regime change in January 2015. The opening of democratic space reshaped the political terrain in the Northern Province, with the emergence of a number of social movements for resources and livelihoods. This paper seeks to analyze the politics of such movements for land rights, against indebtedness, of fisher co-operatives and of struggles by oppressed caste communities, as they resist both the neoliberal policies

of the Central Government and Tamil nationalist populist politics that seek to reproduce the authoritarian nationalism of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam. The central question in this paper is whether these localized rural struggles that are geographically dispersed and in different sectors can create alliances towards an emancipatory politics. Furthermore, the paper will draw on progressive historical antecedents, including what remains of once vibrant social institutions, particularly producer co-operatives and rural organizations, to consider their contribution towards a new rural politics.

Biographies:



Ahilan Kadirgamar and Niyanthini Kadirgamar are independent researchers engaged with the political economy of post-war Sri Lanka and members of the Alliance for Economic Democracy. Ahilan’s writings, including as a fortnightly columnist in the Daily Mirror, focus on neoliberal policies in the country and struggles in post-war northern Sri Lanka. Niyanthini’s research interests include gender, land and migrant labor, and she is a visiting lecturer at the Jaffna campus of the Open University of Sri Lanka.

4) Author: Aleh Ivanou

Title: The current conjuncture in Belarus

Abstract:

Addressing “The current conjuncture: rural roots and consequences” ERPI theme, I aim to make a diagnosis of rural social environment and economy, and thus break ground for a prognosis for emancipation in Belarus, where the dictatorial regime currently dominates a large rural population. My paper is going to clarify aspects of Belarusian paternalist state and exclusion, authoritarian “rationalisation” of the Belarusian agricultural sector, and possibilities for societal recovery. My research questions thus concern the workings of the authoritarian populism and exclusion, principles and perspectives of the top-down modernisation, and prospective emancipation. I thereby expect to make theoretical contribution in such spheres as post-communist racisms, authoritarian modernisation, and post-Soviet transitology. I am going to address Belarusian Roma whose lot is slightly alleviated by the political regime (in the form of tiny allowances) but who are largely marginalized by rank-and-file Belarusian population (whose unemployed are regarded by the regime as social parasites), I stress the active role of ordinary people in the exclusion and marginalisation, and show a paradox whereby even without targeting a “racialized other,” the populist authoritarianism prepares the ground for the racialized exclusion. Responding to its systemic crisis, the regime opts for arbitrary de-collectivization, as Belarusian post-kolkhozes are forced to transform into JSCs, with the majority interest transferred to the state. Intentionally or otherwise, this authoritarian modernization results in de-peasantification, whereby redundant employees prefer to leave for cities instead of becoming individual farmers. Among emancipation vestiges, there is a trend for the deserters to return to their villages and for the new-fangled JSCs to backtrack to their previous status and away from the state dictate, assuming responsibility for their debts and bracing themselves for other free-market risks. The emancipatory politics would thus concern inter alia efforts directed at realigning villagers, restoring local communalism, and further promoting rural economic sovereignty.

Biography:



My PhD and subsequent research specialization is in urban social movements in Moscow. Presently I have shifted the focus on the Belarusian rural setting, independent food provisioning strategies, and especially quiet food sovereignty. My previous experience concerns university instruction (Geography), working in an environmental consultancy and as an engineer in the oil&gas sector. Later, I was a postdoc in Sweden and a visiting research fellow in the US. Presently I act as independent researcher and volunteer for the public cause in



Belarus, which enables me collecting empirical material. I reside in Gomel, and focus south-eastern Belarus, next to the Chernobyl estrangement zone.

5) **Authors:** Ana Felicien, Licia Romero and Christina M. Schiavoni

Title: Food politics in a time of crisis: Corporate power vs. popular power in the shifting relations of state, society and capital in Venezuela's food system

Abstract:

This paper will critically examine growing trends of authoritarian populism in Venezuela, the role of food provisioning in these, and responses from both above and below. As stark inequalities in food access were among the sparks for popular uprisings in the 1980s to 1990s, food and agricultural policies have been a key priority of the Bolivarian government since 1999. While some of these policies could be characterized as populist, we argue that moves toward authoritarian populism seen today are coming not from the government, as implied by dominant narratives of both the left and right, from the forces opposing it, which are increasingly encroaching into the state. This is seen, for instance, in the right-wing takeover of the National Assembly in 2015, based on a populist campaign of ending ongoing food shortages. Meanwhile, Venezuela's main federation of large-scale producers has used the shortages as a pretext for advancing capital-intensive forms of agriculture, employing 'campesino' imagery strikingly similar to that of the country's agrarian social movements, while it attempts to roll back their hard-won gains in agrarian reform. The owner of country's largest private food company, responsible for many of the missing food items, has recently announced his candidature for president, employing the same populist discourse of 'feeding the people'. In confronting the shortages, the government is faced with a legitimacy dilemma: the short-term fix of distributing more imported foods implies further supporting, through additional public petrodollars, the very forces in opposition to it, which control the country's food import complex. Simultaneously, grassroots movements are calling for and forging radically different solutions emerging from the crisis, providing an important counterbalance to the moves toward authoritarian populism. This paper will look at the shifting relations among state, society, and capital shaping Venezuela's food system and the role of recently converging alternatives.

Biographies:



Ana Felicien is a Venezuelan agroecology activist and researcher based in Caracas. She works at the Ecosystems and Global Change Laboratory of the Venezuelan Institute of Scientific Research (IVIC) focused on agroecology and food sovereignty. She is a founding member of Semillas del Pueblo (Seeds of the People), which catalyzed a nationwide bottom-up process for the collective construction of a new national Seed Law. She recently co-edited a book on this process, *Semillas del Pueblo: luchas y resistencias por la protección y reproducción de la vida* (Seeds of the People: Struggles and resistance for the protection and reproduction of life).



Licia Romero is a Venezuelan researcher, professor and agroecology activist based in Mérida at the University of the Andes. For the past fifteen years she has been working on Andean peasant seed systems and agroecological practices via participatory research projects. She is also a founding member of Mano a Mano - Intercambio Agroecológico (Hand to Hand - Agroecological Exchange), a local organization focused on distribution of agroecologically-produced food based on direct interaction between consumers and producers. Last year she held the position of president of the Foundation for the Development of Science and Technology in Mérida State, FUNDACITE Mérida.



Christina M. Schiavoni is a PhD researcher at the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS) in The Hague, Netherlands. Originally from the US, she has been living in Venezuela over the past year and a half, researching efforts toward food sovereignty. She has worked



as a food sovereignty advocate and organizer in the US and internationally. She was involved in the founding of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance and the Food Sovereignty Prize and served on the International Planning Committee (IPC) for Food Sovereignty as well as the Civil Society Mechanism of the United Nations Committee on World Food Security.

6) Author: Arturo Ezquerro-Cañete

Title: Beyond Caudillismo? Alternative Approaches to Rural Politics in Paraguay

Abstract:

The concern of this paper is with the shifting dynamics of authoritarian populism in Paraguay, which can be traced back through a long history of caudillismo, a politics characterized by the leadership of strong men with personnel connections to “el pueblo Paraguayo” (“the Paraguayan people”). This was precisely the sort of appeal that made Alfredo Stroessner’s dictatorship (1954-1989) so successful. However, populism has not been rigid or unchanging, but rather it has shown itself to be extremely flexible, able to refashion and rearticulate itself through different political periods. In its contemporary form, agrarian populism takes different forms, from romanticised forms of indigenism to deeply nationalist discourses –particularly evident near the border with Brazil where native Paraguayans feel aggrieved of their dispossession amidst land takeover by Brazilians and ‘Brasiguayos’. Given these shifting national dynamics, and in the regional context of a receding pink tide, wherein left-wing governments have failed to produce more radical changes with respect to agrarian and agricultural policies –culminating in Paraguay with the ‘parliamentary coup’ against President Fernando Lugo in June 2012, instigated by the landlord class– what are the possible sources of change, reform and emancipatory rural politics required to confront authoritarian populism? To answer these questions, this paper will examine the history of state-society relations in Paraguay, focussing on the ebb of flow of leadership accountability within peasant organizations. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of these changes in relation to the prospects for the development of emancipatory rural politics –and the question as to whether they can be scaled up and coordinated in such a way as to constitute a viable and vibrant alternative to the unsustainable corporate production of industrial foods.

Biography:



Arturo Ezquerro-Cañete is a Ph.D. candidate in International Development Studies at Saint Mary’s University, Canada and the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, Mexico, where he holds a Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología (CONACYT) Scholarship. He has been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Centro de Estudios Rurales Interdisciplinarios (CERI) in Asunción, Paraguay. His works have been or will be published in journals such as *Journal of Agrarian Change* and *Estudios Críticos del Desarrollo*, and he is a contributing author in the forthcoming *The Class Struggle in Latin America*.

7) Author: Brian Walter

Title: Nostalgia and Precarious Placemaking in Southern Poultry Worlds: Immigration, Labor, and Community Building in Rural Northern Alabama

Abstract:

In popular discourse, Alabama is often taken as a metonym for Trump’s America: emblematic of the misogynist, racist and xenophobic politics of the populist groundswell. I trace the emergence of this politics by examining community formation and co-constitutive identities of the White and Latinx communities in Albertville, Alabama (where 82.8% voted for Donald Trump), a rural city dominated by the influence of the poultry industry and, in a related turn, dramatically reconstituted by a doubling of Latinx immigration (now 29.8% of the population) over the



past 15 years. In Albertville, the poultry industry forms the apex of systemic precarity, where workers face low wages with hazardous work conditions and owners compete in a market with notoriously small margins for profit. I examine and compare how White and Latinx communities use dwellings and the built environment to create a sense of place, which forges stability in this precarious landscape. How can nostalgia and longing be read in Albertville's vernacular landscape, and what pasts and futures are gestured towards by the public spaces, front yards and gardens of its residents? What figures of "the Southerner" or "the Latinx migrant" are formed in the environment and in what ways are they co-constitutive of each other? How are activist groups (including those not traditionally considered activists) managing identity and building community within the unique pressures of the current political moment? This approach entails viewing more-than-human actors, such as Southern heirloom tomatoes or botanicals carried across the border, as participating in a sensuous politics and argues for the potential of an emancipatory politics that works in the affective everyday. Through this research I destabilize the oversimplified tropes of the "timeless Southerner" and "placeless migrant," and contribute to a description of the entanglements of history, identity, economics and place from which the identity of "Trump's America" has emerged.

Biography:



In 2016 I began a doctoral program in cultural anthropology at the University of California-Santa Cruz. My research is broadly concerned with the connection between humans, landscape and the built environment and more specifically: the cultural memory held in the material world and its ramifications for community formation, identity and future politics. I have an undergraduate degree in anthropology and philosophy from the University of Georgia and entered academia after two years of teaching high school in the Arkansas Delta, and two years working in a high school based social work agency in South Brooklyn.

8) **Authors:** Burak Gürel, Bermal Küçük and Sercan Taş

Title: Rural Roots of the Rise of the Justice and Development Party in Turkey

Abstract:

Our project has three hypotheses regarding the continuously high support for the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) in rural Turkey during the last fifteen years. First we hypothesize that after the previous coalition government's implementation of the harshest neoliberal measures in the agricultural sector, small farmers do not associate neoliberalism with the AKP administration. Secondly, although the AKP did not radically depart from the neoliberal agricultural agenda of previous governments, it has adopted policies that have eased the pressure on small farmers and proletarianized villagers to a considerable extent through the reintroduction of agricultural subsidies and expanding the coverage of social assistance. Hence, although the neoliberal direction of the Turkish economy and agriculture has not changed significantly, the AKP's limited redistribution to lower classes has made the neoliberal transformation more manageable and hegemonic. Finally, we hypothesize that lower classes in rural areas have utilized both the ballot box and direct action to bargain with the AKP government. For instance, hazelnut producers of the Eastern Black Sea region organized mass protests against low procurement prices in 2006 and then voted predominantly for the AKP in the general election in 2007. In Soma town in the Aegean interior, where the decline of small farming has created a large proletarian labor force in the mining sector, mass protests against the AKP government took place following the coalmine disaster in 2014 that took the lives of more than 300 workers. Despite this social unrest, the AKP has since received about half of the total vote in Soma in two successive general elections. We plan to investigate this subject through fieldwork in Ordu and Soma and the collection of quantitative data about the trajectory of agricultural and non-agricultural growth, government subsidies, employment rates, and social assistance in these regions before and after AKP rule.

Biographies:



Burak Gürel is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey. He completed his PhD in sociology at Johns Hopkins University in 2015. His dissertation investigates the role of collective mobilization in the diverse rural economic development performances of China and India between 1950 and 1990. Gürel's scholarly interests include political economy, historical sociology, rural development, social movements, and welfare politics, with a particular focus on China, India, and Turkey. He teaches courses on social theory, historical sociology, political sociology, and Asian political economy. Gürel was a Fox International Fellow at the MacMillan Center at Yale University in 2006-07 and a visiting researcher at the Center for Rural China Governance at Huazhong University of Science and Technology in 2012, and the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University in Summer 2016.



Bermal Küçük is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at Koç University. She completed her MA degree in the Department of Sociology at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. Her master's thesis investigates labour and value creation processes in the natural food production sector in contemporary Turkey. Her current research focuses on the capital accumulation processes in this sector. Her primary research interests are the neoliberal transformation of agriculture, women's labour and knowledge, and value creation processes in the natural food sector.



Sercan Taş is a PhD student in the Department of Sociology at Koç University. He completed his MA degree in the Department of Sociology at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul, Turkey. His master's thesis investigates the private governance and supermarketization of the agri-food sector in Turkey. His current research focuses on land market transformation and land grabbing in Turkey. He is interested in the neoliberal transformation of the state, governance of environmental resources, land, agriculture, and changing social relations in rural areas.

9) **Author:** Cesar Suarez

Title: Into the void: the loss of governance in Mexican ejidos

Abstract:

In 1992, the reform to Article 27 in the Constitution transformed the relationship between the State and rural communities, specifically within the land institution called ejido. Before 1992, the government had major control over the peasants through the governance of the ejido as the main electoral and political support group of the regime. After the reform, the ejidos acquired more freedom from the State by obtaining land titles which weakened State's control over the rural areas. The main political outcome of this change was the democratic transition in 2000 and the end of the authoritarian regime. In contrast to the Global North where the rural electorate has inclined towards nativist and far-right parties or movements, in Mexico rural votes have not moved towards populist parties. On the contrary, rural votes vary from pro market, status quo, left parties or even self-government practices. This variety of political identity within rural communities demonstrates how rural politics in Mexico have not experienced the same phenomenon as in western countries. Therefore, it is important to understand what elements drive rural votes in Mexico and what differences might be found between Mexican rural communities and countries where authoritarian populism has developed. A possible answer for the heterogeneity of rural politics in Mexican rural areas relies on the type of governance within the ejidos. The stronger the governance of an ejido is, the less probability an authoritarian populism or status quo parties have to win in rural areas. On the contrary, ejidos with weak governance institutions tend to vote less for progressive political parties or movements. This paper focuses on the endogenous and exogenous variables that have affected governance within the ejido since the 1992 reform to find out what sort of governance's practices and institutions leads to more progressive forms of rural politics.

Biography:



César Suárez Ortiz has a bachelor's degree in Political Science from the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and a Masters of Arts in International Affairs by The New School. He thought Public Administration and Rural Development at UNAM and Chapingo Autonomous University. A researcher at the Latin American Center for Rural Development (RIMISP) in Mexico, he works on policy-making projects on rural development and he participates in the evaluation of development programs for the Mexican government. He has written articles on organized crime in rural areas in Mexico and the implications of rural vote in the elections of the State of Mexico in 2017.

10) Author: Daniela Andrade

Title: Populism from above, populism from below: a class-based critique of state and agrarian movements' politics in Brazil

Abstract:

During the four presidential mandates of the Workers' Party (PT) (2003-2016), Brazil saw a cycle of economic boom and bust, in which agribusiness was, first, a key driver of growth and later, relief to crisis. Inevitably, the state-sponsored expansion of agribusiness created different sorts of agrarian conflicts. Dialoguing with the ERPI framing paper (Scoones et al, 2017) concerns, did such politics make the PT authoritarian? Throughout this period, agrarian movements, in particular, the Landless Workers' Movement (MST), were mobilised against agribusiness, thus, confronting the (authoritarian) state. But were their struggles and political agenda emancipatory in nature? This paper argues that, from the perspective of the Brazilian working class, state's politics were not authoritarian, neither were the agrarian movements' struggles emancipatory; they were both populist, converging as misleading class politics from 'above and below'. During the economic upturn, the PT was mostly praised for its developmentalism. Yet, the transformative potential of its heterodox policies was systemically limited in scale, scope and time by its pursuit of neoliberal economic policies. They were antagonistic to economic democracy, lasting social achievements and thus, to the interest of the working class – a defining aspect of 'populism from above'. Having agribusiness at the centre of growth and economic stabilization has been a manifestation of the neoliberal policy choice. How has this analysis informed the political agenda and strategic actions of agrarian movements? Demanding land reform and support to small landholders, occupying land and spaces inside the state bureaucracy, all together cannot defeat agribusiness or emancipate the 'rural world' on its own right, although that seems to be what they aim for – a crucial aspect of 'populism from below'. The transformation of neoliberal structures of accumulation is decisive, but that will only be realised through the working class engagement in fundamental class politics and effective state control. That is why it is imperative to disclose and confront the populism of the Left.

Biography:



Daniela Andrade is an agronomic engineer, trained in social science research. She holds two Master degrees, one in Environmental Science from the University of Sao Paulo (USP, 2003), the other in Development Studies from the International Institute of Social Studies (ISS, 2009). In the period in between, she was an organic member of the Landless Workers Movement in Sao Paulo. She currently lives in the Netherlands, where she began a doctoral program in Agrarian Political Economy at ISS. Her research explores the organic links between the agrarian question in Brazil and the dominant dynamics of accumulation, economic and social reproduction.



11) **Author:** Joám Evans Pim

Title: Back to the Commons: Emancipatory Rural Politics in Galiza

Abstract:

Much of rural Galiza has been, for several decades, an almost uncontested stronghold for the Spanish right-wing Partido Popular. Most of its municipalities are characterized by small, dispersed and aging population, lack of employment perspectives for youth and continuous dismantlement of basic services. The 1936-39 civil war and subsequent dictatorship attempted to erase the memory of rural emancipatory politics and the grass-roots institutions were it emerged and expressed itself. Lousame, a municipality with 3,500 inhabitants in the West of Galicia, fits in this pattern but also displays the signs of emerging social contestation. In 2015 a libertarian municipalist platform gained 12% of the vote and was a few dozen votes away from gaining two councilors and depriving the right wing from its majority. Simultaneously, the libertarian "Coluna Sanfins" civil society group was formed (taking its name from the Anarcho-syndicalist column that left Lousame in July 1936 to fight the Fascist military coup) helping to mobilize popular resistance to Government-backed destructive projects such as industrial waste landfills, mining operations, common land grabbing, etc., while reconnecting current struggles with the local emancipatory movements of the past. The move to reclaim the institutions of rural direct assembly democracy of traditional Common Land Communities is especially significant. Lousame currently has 32 Commons Assemblies that account for almost half of the municipality's territory. These Commons Assemblies are outside of the system of State institutions and self-manage important services such as water, wood for heating and cooking, common village machinery and also represent a significant contribution to household economies. The shift to repoliticize traditional commons institutions as tools for emancipation outside the logics of capitalist modernity is the focus of this working paper. Through the study of a small commons community in Lousame, insights should be gained on how these experiences can contribute to emancipatory rural politics elsewhere.

Biography:



Joám Evans Pim is a commoner in the Froxán Common Lands Community, in Lousame, Galiza. He is also an activist in political, environmental, cultural and human rights matters, particularly focused on reviving rural assembly democracy, defending and restoring Common Lands, and confronting environmentally degrading projects. In 2015-2016 he served for 4 months as Local Councilor in the Lousame Municipal Council, for the libertarian municipalist Terra de Lousame platform. He is member of the Advisory Council of the Transnational Institute of Social Ecology and a doctoral candidate at Åbo Akademi University (Finland) where he seasonally lectures on civil disobedience and nonviolent action.

12) **Author:** Jonah Wedekind

Title: Authoritarian Agro-populism in Ethiopia: unpopular land deals & policing the agrarian crisis in Oromia

Abstract:

My ERPI working paper investigates the rural identity politics of social resistance to state-facilitated transnational land deals—many of which failed—in peripheral frontiers of Ethiopia's Oromia Region. Connecting locally specific micropractices of land deal resistance and microprocesses of land deal failures in the frontiers to the more general macrocontext of Ethiopia's agrarian political economy, I identify a conjunctural crisis of the ethnic-federalist state and its development strategy of agrarian transformation. With an eye on the 2015/16 uprisings in Oromia, which included symbolic attacks on foreign mega farms, I argue that since the land rush took hold in Ethiopia in 2007/08, previously protracted and latent social-economic and ecological conflicts over land in the peripheries have increasingly gained in potency and moved not only 'agrarian questions of labour' (Bernstein 2011) but also questions of social identity rooted in control over, access to, and use of rural land to the centre of Ethiopian politics. The ruling party's policing of the crisis has revealed the contradictions of authoritarian agro-populism in Ethiopia —

an ambivalent and unstable amalgam of 'authoritarian high modernism' (Scott 2003) and 'agrarian neo-populism' which politically claims to take the part of peasants (Bernstein 2017), yet economically pursues a top-down, state-led path towards (agro-)industrialisation. Applying a Gramscian conjunctural approach, developed by Stuart Hall and recently reinvigorated by Tania Murray-Li, the first part of the paper accordingly outlines the general characteristics and traces the changes and continuities of the Ethiopian state's peculiar form of authoritarian agro-populist governmentality from the early 1990s to the policing of recent Oromo uprisings in 2015/16. The second part of the paper then unfolds an extended ethnographic case study (Burawoy 1998) of the long-term trajectory and eventual failure (2007-2015) of one particular state-facilitated transnational land investment project in the Hararghe frontier, located in the Oromia Region of Eastern Ethiopia.

Biography:



I am a PhD candidate at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in Germany, currently finalizing my thesis on the political ecology of failed agrofuel land deals in Ethiopia. From 2013 to 2016 I held a Marie Curie (Early Stage Career) Fellowship with ENTITLE, The European Network for Political Ecology. Prior to this I was a student research assistant at Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin (ZMO) and received my MSc in Development Studies (with a focus on Agrarian Change) at SOAS in London in 2011. My research interests include political ecologies of agrarian transformation, land conflicts, labour struggles, development project failures and Ethiopia's developmental state.

13) Author: Khin Zaw Win

Title: Getting Past Populism and Democratic Disappointments in Myanmar

Abstract:

Populism was useful in getting the present NLD government to power. Now the authoritarian takes over. After the first year in office had passed, there are new restrictions on journalists, academics and civil society. Before 2015 there was the military or semi-military government to lay the blame on, but now it is a supposedly democratic government elected on a (populist) landslide that is in charge. While admittedly there has been liberalization, new challenges and relapses have emerged. There was a severe clampdown in the Rohingya areas of northern Rakhine state from October 2016. The security forces carried this out, and the NLD government did little more than 'cover up' for them. On the main peace front, despite two sessions of the 21st century Panglong Peace conference, peace remains elusive, one important reason being that much of the discourse is at elite levels, with women and civil society more or less sidelined. Throughout successive eras, ideologies and governments in the largely agrarian country that Myanmar is, the rural sector has always been marked by subservience, subjection and exploitation. The standard reference to 'uncle farmers' and the gratitude that is owed to them notwithstanding, the rural populace still occupies the bottom rungs in society and are very seldom taken very seriously. Farmers have little representation in the politics of the country. Farmers' unions are now legally permitted and numbers have emerged at village level. But they are not yet able to coalesce at township level. Unions are viewed at askance by the establishment old and new, and the NLD has deliberately kept them at a distance. Many might feel that there is no alternative, and do we want the military-backed party to return to power? However that choice between political parties is outdated. A backlash is in the air and it has nothing to do with political parties. It is being led by student activists, civil society, journalists and disgruntled party democrats. The rural world may be traditionally weak but it provides the issues that stoke the counter-movement.

Biography:

Khin Zaw Win is Director of the Tampadipa Institute, working on policy advocacy and capacity building since 2006. His current engagement includes land, communal issues, nationalism and international relations. As a member of the Land Core Group, he has facilitated inputs to the two land laws (2012) and carried out public consultations for the National Land Use Policy (adopted 2016). At present he is carrying out a study on land tenure insecurity, to be

used in policy dialogue. He is an honorary advisor at the Myanmar Institute for Strategic and International Studies, the Foreign Ministry's think tank. He served in the Health Services of Myanmar, and Sabah, Malaysia and did the Masters in Public Policy programme at the National University of Singapore. He did a fellowship with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (New York office) and was also a Chevening Fellow at the University of Birmingham. He was also a prisoner of conscience in Myanmar for "seditious writings" and human rights work from 1994 – 2005.

14) Author: Kyla Sankey

Title: The Rural Origins of Colombia's Authoritarian Populism

Abstract:

In Colombia, three decades of neoliberal policies have driven deeper inequalities, precarious livelihoods and displacement amongst the rural poor. Yet the particularity of the Colombian case is that it is the far-right that has taken political leadership over the dislocations and discontents generated by neoliberalism. Here, a form of reactionary authoritarian populism, with origins in counterinsurgent groups, landlords and narco-mafias, has strengthened its dominance over both the state and civil society in the contemporary era. This paper seeks to provide an interpretation of this phenomenon through a closer examination of the dynamics of political mobilisation around the processes of agrarian change. My argument is that contemporary right-wing populism can be traced back to the historical trajectories of Colombia's rural struggles. Throughout the course of capitalist development in the Colombian countryside, landlords linked to local and regional political machines and military forces have blocked reforms at every turn, instead engineering a landlord-led, reactionary path of agrarian change. Since the 1980s and 1990s, these reactionary forces have gradually augmented their political power by building counterinsurgent paramilitary militias with a strong social base amongst the displaced, informal and unorganised new working classes in semi-urban areas. Meanwhile, the countryside remains a more contested terrain, wherein the Left has sustained its political leadership amongst landless workers and settler peasants in increasingly adverse conditions through the construction of semi-autonomous rural communities. Its main difficulty has been in translating these organisational strengths to address the new dynamics of dispossession, proletarianisation and marginalisation faced by its social base. Taking a case study of the dynamics of mobilisation, organisation and alliance-building amongst various political forces in the face of a rapidly transforming rural society in the Middle Magdalena region, this paper seeks to provide new insights into the everyday politics of authoritarian populism and its alternatives in Colombia.

Biography:



Kyla Sankey is a doctoral candidate in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research has focused on mining and natural resource extraction, land-grabbing, peasant livelihoods, development and social movements in Colombia and Latin America. She has published on these topics in a number of scholarly journals including *Latin American Perspectives*, *Journal of Developing Societies* and *Critical Sociology*, as well as non-scholarly outlets such as *Jacobin*, *Truth-Out* and *Open Democracy*. Her dissertation explores the dynamics of agrarian change and new peasant movements in Colombia.

15) Authors: Laksmi A. Savitri, Hanny Wijaya, Ciptaningrat Larastiti and Samadhya Institute

Title: Building Egalitarian Agrarian Communities in Rural Java: A Counter to Authoritarian Populism?

Abstract:

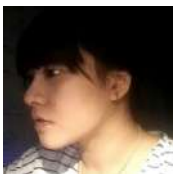
This study will explore two cases of rural people's struggles to re-imagine rural spaces as egalitarian, self-managing agrarian communities, in a context where for decades such initiatives have been othered as 'communist'

in the populist rhetoric of both state, elite and sectarian religious forces. After the mass killings of leftist organisations in 1965, two peasant organisations managed to survive. The Wangunwati Rubber Plantation and Production Cooperative (KPPKW) in West Java is a former colonial plantation whose workers took over the plantation in 1950 and formed the independent cooperative in 1959. Under the guidance of Indonesian Peasant Movement (GTI), they implemented their land reform on subsistence plots and retained the plantation for communal ownership. In 1970s, they successfully exports Class A sheet rubber, and is now managed and worked by the third generation of former plantation workers. In East Java, the Kulonbambang Plantation which was abandoned by Dutch owner in 1949, was converted into peasants' farming. But, in the 1973 the peasants were dispossessed by the state in favour of a national plantation company, reverting to wage-labourer status. Since 1998 however their peasant organisation has struggled to re-assert their rights to land, achieving land redistribution and forming an independent co-operative in 2012. Both peasants' organisations are still struggling in current communism-phobia context of radical Islam and its alliance with elites and state actors. We question, how and why these peasant struggles can survive from communist labeling in the past and present, and are able to develop cooperative as egalitarian rural communities? We also intend to study both their internal and external political dynamics, including gender and generational dynamics, and the nature of the alternative rural communities they have managed to create. We will explore these two cases as examples of emancipatory rural politics in environments consistently hostile to such movements.

Biographies:



Laksmi Savitri is a researcher at Samadhya Institute and a lecturer at Gadjah Mada University Yogyakarta, with research interests on agrarian politics, gender and social movement studies.



Hanny Wijaya, M.A. is a researcher at Samadhya Institute, with research interests on agrarian politics, gender and cooperative movement studies.



Ciptaningrat Larastiti, M.A. is a researcher at Samadhya Institute and Sajogyo Institute, with research interests on gender, political ecology and youth studies.

Samadhya Institute is a critical agrarian research community based on Yogyakarta, which aims to develop critical and reflective agrarian studies in Indonesia.

16) Authors: Laura Schoenberger, Alice Beban and Vanessa Lamb

Title: Populist politics and colonial cartographies: How Cambodia's undemarcated border became a site of disruption

Abstract:

Cambodia's border with Vietnam and its cartographic representations are contested. As much as 17 per cent of the border remains undemarcated and is the source of significant tension and conflict. The possible use of 'fake' maps by the ruling party has been key in accusations, led by the opposition party, that the country is losing territory through encroachment and land grabbing. The force of these claims can be seen in marches in which hundreds of citizens have gone to inspect border posts and to monitor encroachment -- a trend that was particularly pronounced



in 2015 as tensions came to a near-boiling point around Vietnamese-owned plantations and military buildings near undemarcated parts of the border. Amid accusations of ‘fake’ maps, the Prime Minister petitioned the UN to release maps drawn by French colonial authorities to dispel tension and to distribute to provincial authorities tasked with controlling the border. We investigate this border conflict as the manifestation of rising populist nationalist sentiment and a response to perceived territorial crises rooted in specific historical, institutional and social structures. This investigation is guided by two key questions: how is populist nationalism stoked and shaped by political rhetoric and anti-land grab mobilizations? And how is it further shaped by the layering of colonial history, occupation and rural people’s everyday experiences with land? In the lead-up to the Cambodian national election in 2018, this case sheds light on the ways authoritarian populism (Scoones et al 2017) is deployed by the long-standing ruling party as well as the opposition party and activist politicians -- the very actors that are often seen as embodying the potential for emancipatory politics. This blurs the distinction between local views of emancipatory politics and regressive political practices. How is it that informal border patrolling and citizen-led disciplining of the border becomes seen as a form of emancipatory politics in the same way that a Trump or Brexit vote becomes an act of resistance? We will investigate these questions through a mix of qualitative methods, including textual and cartographic analysis, and interviews with relevant political actors as well as with people ‘on the ground’ in border areas, in order to understand how populist nationalism is shaped by political rhetoric and rural people’s everyday experiences with the border.

Biographies:

Laura Schoenberger, PhD Candidate, Department of Geography, York University, Toronto, Canada Laura’s research interests are in political ecology, agrarian transformations, state power, conflict and land. She is currently completing her dissertation on land control and property formation in the context of large scale land acquisitions and recent state efforts to redistribute land in Cambodia. Laura is the guest editor of the 2017 special issue of *Journal of Peasant Studies* titled ‘Southeast Asian Perspectives on Agrarian-Environmental Transformations’ (with Peter Vandergeest). She has collaborated with the NGO Forum of Cambodia to produce a major report on land titling initiatives (co-authored with Mark Grimsditch) and with Oxfam to conduct research on land-poor and landless farmers.

Alice Beban, Lecturer in Sociology, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand Alice completed her PhD in Development Sociology at Cornell University in 2017. Her research addresses land rights, agricultural production and gender concerns to understand people’s changing relationships with land. She has collaborated with local NGOs and the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace to carry out action research on land conflict and human security, and to support women community activists with land rights training/networking workshops.

Vanessa Lamb, Lecturer, School of Geography, University of Melbourne Vanessa Lamb completed her PhD at York University’s Department of Geography in 2014. Dr. Lamb’s focus is on political geography of borders and political ecology of water. Her professional experiences includes policy analysis and research into the social dimensions of environmental change with Oxfam, International Rivers, and UN Women. She is the lead PI for a CGIAR WLE Greater Mekong project on water governance titled: Matching policies, institutions and practices of water governance in the Salween-Thanlwin-Nu River Basin: Towards inclusive, informed, and accountable water governance. She is currently co-editing a book with Dr Carl Middleton on Salween water governance.

17) Authors: Leonardo van den Berg and Margriet Goris

Title: Agroecological peasant territories in the rise of populist movements in Brazil

Abstract:

In the past decade, right-winged populist movements have surged in Brazil, penetrated government at several levels, and have played a key role in impeaching former president Dilma Rouseff. Since then, laws, public services and public policies that have protected and supported peasants, workers and minorities are being dismantled. The

practices and ideology of populist movements clash with those of peasant organisations and movements in Brazil, which had received considerable support under the labour party government, and who pursue inclusive and emancipatory politics. Peasant movements have never fully trusted the government. Born in the aftermath of Brazil's 1970s military dictatorship, many distrusted government and directed efforts at strengthening their base through the construction of autonomous "peasant territories". These territories are constituted by land, market, innovation and education systems that are shaped by peasants and other local actors and that allow for peasant autonomy. Agroecology played an important role in the construction of these territories and in linking territorial development and expansion to cities, landless and rural workers, indigenous and black communities and to feminist and environmental movements. This research explores how peasant territories are affected by populist movements' rise to government and whether, and how, peasant territories offer a more inclusive and emancipatory alternative. The article looks at three exemplary peasant territories in the Zona da Mata region in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The research employs a performative perspective, which takes reality as constituted by practice. It analyses how populist movements are affecting the practices that constitute land, market, innovation, education and other systems of the territory. It also analyses who or what these practices include and exclude.

Biographies:



Leonardo van den Berg is a sandwich PhD candidate at the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group at Wageningen University and at the Rural Economics Department of the Federal University of Viçosa. His current research is on how agroecology reworks the boundaries between nature, science and society. He also works for Cultivate!, an independent NGO working on agroecology and is co-founder of Toekomstboeren (La Via Campesina Netherlands). He is part of the coordination team of the Dutch Agroecology and Food Sovereignty platform: Voedsel Anders.



Margriet Goris is a PhD candidate at the Rural Extension group of the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) and the Forest and Nature Conservation Policy group at Wageningen University. From August 2016 until August 2018 she lives in Brazil to do research on the agroecology movement in Brazil. Margriet Goris is an ethnovideographer who works on the interface of film, research and education. She lectures on video for data collection, education and communication, and is project leader and researcher at the Science Shop, a community-based research programme of Wageningen UR.

18) Author: Loka Ashwood

Title: Rural Protest that Works: The Tenets of Emancipatory Politics

Abstract:

In a time of widespread pessimism over the tenor of American rural politics, emancipatory cases of rural protest call for documentation and even replication on a broader scale. This project aims to bring attention to the political tenets of what works in rural America, as much of the current literature instead focuses on the failure and wrongheadedness of rural politics (Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2015; Vance 2015). This research project takes the first steps by documenting the alliances, activities, and language that make for successful, grassroots protest against corporate animal production in west central Illinois. In doing so, it takes seriously the role of the state in sponsoring agricultural economic development schemes that ire rural residents. In the Illinois context, it is the policy of the Illinois Department of Agriculture to never explicitly deny an application to build animal feeding facilities. This project uses political theories associated with anarchism to understand the role that anti-governmentalism plays in successful cases of political protest lead by residents who seek to protect their health and property. In doing so, this work aims to (1) create simple, publicly understandable textual graphics that depict how successful rural protest for just and equitable ends can happen; and (2) bring anti-governmentalism into the fold of understanding proactive political action in rural contexts.



Biography:



Loka Ashwood is an assistant professor of Rural Sociology at Auburn University. Her scholarship tackles the inner workings of the state and economy that leave many rural people on the margins of formal politics. Her forthcoming book with Yale University Press, *For-Profit Democracy: Power and Profit in the Georgia Countryside*, pinpoints the corporate-state as driving rural anti-governmentalism and anarchism. Last year, she co-edited a guest issue in the *Journal of Rural Studies* on the rural as a dimension of environmental injustice. Ashwood has worked with communities in Alabama, Illinois, Ireland, Georgia, and Wisconsin to create more just pathways for a rural future.

19) Authors: Maywa Montenegro, Antonio Roman-Alcalá, Siena Chrisman and Alex Liebman

Title: Histories, trajectories, and possibilities in emancipatory rural organizing within the United States of America

Abstract:

The rise and election of Donald Trump in the USA was a shock to many urban people. In this paper, we address the involvement of rural people and processes in this rise. We are curious to understand: Why do the politics of the rural USA seem so regressive at this historical juncture? What explains the rise of white supremacist language, organization, action, and power? What factors help to explain the attractiveness of an elite billionaire like Donald Trump to the now-practically-mythological rural “white working class”? Yet it is also imperative to understand how rural social movements have themselves analyzed recent decades of rural disinvestment, transformation, and breakdown, and how they have responded contemporarily to this new era of authoritarian populism. To understand this we will examine the historical trajectories of rural organizing – and lack thereof – in relation to the often invisible political-economic structures that shape reality in rural areas. We will explore the dynamic nature of social movements of the last 30 years in the rural Midwest and West and their relevance for emancipatory political possibilities today. Given the well-known challenges to community-led and community-serving rural development, and in the absence of well-articulated political visions on the Left that speak to rural needs, where are models of Left-leaning rural organizing currently thriving, how did they develop, and how can they be strengthened? The paper will counter pessimistic readings of the current juncture with a call to support existing organizing efforts of rural people of many ethnicities and nationalities. These efforts are crafting, spreading, and defending on the ground and policy alternatives that provide much-needed rural economic development and cultural re-valorization, while contributing to larger emancipatory political projects to transform society across urban-rural divides. The authors will work with social movement partners in developing research questions, appropriate methodologies, shared analysis, and the final paper.

Biographies:



Maywa Montenegro, PhD Candidate at UC Berkeley, draws on political ecology, science and technology studies, and rural sociology to address issues of seed diversity and access to it. Her research focuses on social movement and scientist partnerships that promote agroecology, seed sovereignty, and alternatives to intellectual property. Her writing has been published in the *Journal of Peasant Studies*, *Agriculture & Human Values*, *Globalizations*, *Elementa*, and *Gastronomica*. Email: maywamontenegro@gmail.com
Website: <https://ourenvironment.berkeley.edu/people/maywa-montenegro>



Antonio Roman-Alcalá has founded urban farms, local alliances, and grassroots policy councils; published in both peer-reviewed and popular outlets; and directed a documentary film on food systems in California. Most recently, he has been working to link academic, grassroots, and advocacy communities to advance agroecology in North America. He holds a BA from UC Berkeley and an MA from ISS in The Hague.

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Siena Chrisman is a writer, researcher, and advocate focused on food and farm policy, currently working on a book about the 1980s farm crisis and the progressive activism that arose in response. Her writing has appeared in *Modern Farmer*, *Civil Eats*, *Edible Brooklyn*, and she has conducted research on a variety of food systems topics for numerous national nonprofits. For eight years, she managed partnerships and communications for WhyHunger.

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Alex Liebman, Masters student, agroecology, University of Minnesota, is a researcher in plant/soil agroecology and political ecology, currently completing an MS degree in Applied Plant Sciences at the University of Minnesota, building on previous years of experience in urban farming. His research concerns soil carbon transformations in agroecosystems employing legume cover crops, as well as the political economy of knowledge production of development-oriented agronomy in Colombia. Email: aliebman@umn.edu

20) Author: Rebecca Shelton

Title: Amidst economic and cultural complexity, what drove support for authoritarian populism in rural, Kentucky farm communities?

Abstract:

Recent political shifts in the western world are characterized by an agenda and rhetoric of nationalism - both in economic and ethnographic terms. Much of the support given to these agendas has come from rural regions, but the forces that motivated this political agency are not entirely clear. A combination of economic disaffection, demographics, and socio-cultural values have been used by the media and by analysts to provide a lens from which to assess the political divide between urban and rural regions, but have failed to provide clarity in terms of causality and/or trigger. This paper will seek deeper insight into that which motivates the political agency of a population that contributes to an important rural economy: farmers. This research was conducted in the U.S. state of Kentucky- a state in which 62.5% of the voters elected President Donald J Trump and in which farmers have recently undergone a significant economic transition away from a highly profitable and culturally meaningful cash crop- tobacco. Interviews were conducted with farmers, extension agents, policy makers, and representatives from relevant agricultural organizations across central and eastern Kentucky to explore a) whether economic changes in the wake of the tobacco transition (a possible trigger) are explicitly connected to farmers' political agency, b) whether farmers actively leverage the political system to affect farm profitability and c) the drivers that motivate farmer political agency that are not overtly connected to economic circumstances. It will investigate how pillars of rural, farm culture, intimate personal experiences, and the occupational culture of farming may have framed national political rhetoric and agenda. We posit that even within a population that can be categorized as somewhat homogenous - rural, Kentucky farmers- the drivers that motivated political agency in support of authoritarian populism will be diverse.

Biography:



Rebecca Shelton is a PhD Student at Arizona State University (2016-present). She has an MS degree in integrated plant and soil sciences from the University of Kentucky and a BS degree in earth and environmental sciences from Furman University. She is currently a research assistant for two projects that require rigorous engagement with the topics of transformative pathway and transformative space creation, human agency in socio-ecological systems, and social learning. Her personal research is focused on understanding the cognitive and ecological barriers that stall or bar economic transitions in rural, primary sector economies such as agriculture and mining.

21) Authors: Riad Azar and Marta Ascherio

Title: Boom Town Poison: Political Culture Under the Shadow of Lead Poisoning in West Texas

Abstract:

How do citizens reconcile conservative politics with the daily consequences of state inaction? How does the lack of access to basic services, such as clean water, shape particular forms of political ideology? Based on 40 in-depth interviews, three months of participant observation, and historical and archival research, this paper examines how political culture is produced and contested in a small working-class community in rural West Texas, USA. An oil boomtown of the early 20th century, the population of our field site has steadily declined over the last one hundred years. Save for a small boom in the 1970s, the crumbling infrastructure, lack of jobs, and contaminated water containing twenty-eight times the federal limit of lead are consequences of socioeconomic transformations that are not unique to West Texas, but are characteristic of rural America. Rather than seek to argue that residents are beholden to an ideological contradiction and/or false consciousness, this project seeks to understand a “paradox” (Katz 2001): how support for authoritarian populism emerges from rural dispossession and is legitimized through everyday practice. By paying particular attention to not only what residents say, but also what they do (Jerolmack and Khan 2014), we argue that political ideology must be understood as a lived experience rooted in the routines, decisions, and practices of everyday life. While some residents resist the evidence and continue to consume the water, many residents purchase bottled water for consumption, cooking, and bathing. By observing and analyzing how residents engage with a contaminated water supply, we argue towards a moral economy of rural dispossession, which provides ideological support for populist authoritarianism.

Biographies:



Riad Azar is a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin, where he is a fellow at the Urban Ethnography Lab. He holds a MSc in Political Sociology from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a BA in Political Science from William Paterson University of New Jersey. His research interests include political and economic sociology, informal governance, and organized crime. Riad sits on the editorial boards of *New Politics: A Journal of Socialist Thought* and *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*.



Marta Ascherio is a doctoral student in Sociology at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a fellow at the Urban Ethnography Lab and a Population Research Center Trainee. She holds a MSc in Community Development and Applied Economics and a BA in Political Science from the University of Vermont. Her research interests include immigration, nationalism, and social movements.

22) Authors: Ritanjan Das, Nilotal Kumar and Praveen Kumar Priyadarshi

Title: Societal Transformations in an Authoritarian Polity: Evolving Rural-Urban Interfaces in Contemporary India

Abstract:

Contemporary (particularly post-2014) India is showing increasing signs of ‘competitive’ authoritarian populism (Levitsky and Way, 2010), characterised by an evolving amalgamation of economic and religious fundamentalism. The mainstream political discourse in the country is dominated by the sectarian religious forces of Hindu nationalism, serving as the political agency of a development narrative that promises to return India to its ‘greatness of yore’. Furthermore, the pace with which this narrative has found acceptance across vast sections of the society is both perplexing and disturbing. Our primary motivation stems from this perplexity, as we seek to understand the changing realities. Objectives We intend explore two interrelated themes that are demonstrative of such changing circumstances in rural/peri-urban India, outlined below. • Transformation of rural livelihoods: a rapid expansion of real estate projects is a common sight around Indian cities - one of the most visible manifestations of the neoliberal project - transforming what were villages not so long ago. This has led to not only large scale displacement, but also the creation of rural ghettos at the periphery (or sometimes right in the middle) of the urban enclaves. How these rural islands co-exist/interact with the urban settlements, and the resultant transformation of rural livelihoods are some of the issues we will investigate. • Negotiating the ‘right’ narrative: the perpetuation of the right-wing (Hindu nationalist) narrative is a process that is gaining rapid ground. However, there is very limited understanding of (a) the appeal of such narratives to a disempowered yet aspirational population; and (b) how it appropriates everyday civic discourses and engagements. Our second objective is therefore to understand the mechanisms of this appeal and appropriation, by exploring the dissemination and sustenance of such narratives at the grassroots. Methodologically, we propose an ethnographic approach for the study. The field sites are currently being finalised.

Biographies:



Ritanjan Das is a Senior Lecturer at Portsmouth Business School, University of Portsmouth, UK. His research focuses on the political economy of development in contemporary India, particularly exploring the role of local actors, networks and agencies from an anthropological perspective. He received his PhD in Development Studies from the Department of International Development, London School of Economics, for his ethnographic study on the politics of policy transition in the (east-Indian) state of West Bengal. His book *Neoliberalism and the Transforming Left in India: A Contradictory Manifesto* is being published by Routledge, forthcoming in November 2017.



Nilotal Kumar is an Assistant Professor at School of Development, Azim Premji University, in Bangalore. His current research explores the interaction between horticultural restructuring that is underway in semi-arid regions of Andhra Pradesh (South India), and emerging forms of local authority and cultural identity. He received his PhD in Development Studies from the London School of Economics for his ethnographic study of the phenomenon of farmers’ suicides in post-reform India. His book *Unraveling Farmer Suicides in India: Egoism and Masculinity in Peasant Life* was published by Oxford University Press in February 2017.



Praveen Kumar Priyadarshi is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Zakir Husain Delhi College, University of Delhi. His research interest lies in the area of comparative urban politics. He has recently submitted a PhD in Development Studies to the Department of International Development, London School of Economics, and is awaiting the final degree confirmation. His PhD explores the historical construction of urban political institutions in the cities of Ahmedabad and Kanpur, India. His book *Contemporary India: Economy, Society and Politics* (co-authored with Professor Neera Chandhoke) was published by Pearson in June 2009.

23) Author: Sabatho K. Nyamsenda

Title: Agrarian Reform and Rural Activism in Tanzania

Abstract:

The aim of this research is to study the changes that have been taking place in Tanzania since the coming to power of President John Pombe Magufuli in November 2015. Magufuli's reforms have challenged the neoliberal project, through decommodification of education, rejection of free trade deals like the EPAs (economic partnership agreements), and the bold attempt to enhance government's control over the extraction of natural resources. Moreover, the government has revoked titles of some absentee landlords and annulled the "nuance" producer taxes that levied on smallholder farmers. This study examines these reforms in the context of Magufuli's industrial dream which is built on the pro-corporate Green Revolution plan he inherited from his predecessor. The implementation of the Green Revolution under the banner of Kilimo Kwanza triggered rural struggles ranging from riots to land occupations to agro-ecological initiatives. This study seeks to understand the dynamics of these rural struggles (their internal class character, their demands as well as their tactics) and how they have shaped the reforms pursued by the Magufuli government. As authoritarianism and social conservatism have become the order of the day, the paper will explore the possibilities that exist for progressive rural movements under the current regime in Tanzania.

Biography:



Sabatho Nyamsenda is an assistant lecturer at the University of Dar es Salaam, Department of Political Science and Public Administration. His research interests revolve around the agrarian question (land and seed reforms, and the internal dynamics rural movements) and the informal sector (patterns of accumulation, labour regimes and struggles). He is actively involved in the struggles of MVIWATA (a network of smallholder peasants in Tanzania), UWAMATA (the bus drivers' association) and several other grassroots organizations. He is also an organizer with Jukwaa la Wajamaa Tanzania (the Tanzania Socialist Forum) and writes for and appears regularly in local and international media.

24) Authors: Santiago Ripoll

Title: As good as it gets? The new Sandinismo and the co-option of emancipatory rural politics in Nicaragua

Abstract:

Daniel Ortega's electoral victory in 2006 brought hope that the re-vamped Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN) party would reverse neoliberal policies in rural Nicaragua. Yet, 11 years on, with the new FSLN firmly in power, such reversal has not materialised. There is higher investment in agriculture and a deeper role for the State in creating safety nets for the poor, yet the economy remains virtually the same: an export-led, agricultural commodity-based, free-trade economy open to foreign direct investment and imports. Nicaragua's left-leaning populist government's capacity to retain power relies not on authoritarianism but mostly on balancing alliances with traditional/conservative and FSLN-linked elites with the short-term needs of their poorer constituencies. A strong media presence and the influence in democratic legal institutions have allowed for Ortega's to be re-elected, but it is the alliance with past military, political and economic adversaries that cements the governments' power, together with significant public support. Socialist and anti-imperialist rhetoric is accompanied by nationalist messaging cutting across class, disguising the capitalist and resource-extractive nature of the economic system. In rural areas, the FSLN have engaged in agrarian populism, obscuring the existing agrarian differentiation. Some investments reach poor and small-scale farmers, but the means of production are concentrated in the hands of elites, which prioritise extractives (mining and wood) and commodity production (coffee, sugar cane, grains). Only the advance of the agricultural frontier has mitigated rural destitution. A change of party in government would do little to change these policies, and change from within is a challenge.



Emancipatory action in Nicaragua should take the form of a constructive social platform that makes the FSLN accountable to their historic constituencies: showing that not all agriculturalists are the same, breaking down the categories within 'rural people'; and proposing progressive policies that resonate with and mobilise the poorest citizens.

Biography:



Santiago Ripoll is a researcher at the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Sussex. His research focuses on the moral economy of food and farming, and has carried out ethnographic and participatory research on food systems. He is currently undertaking participatory policy research on Nicaraguan food systems, and his PHD fieldwork explored Nicaraguan agri-food systems and the role of farmer moral and political economies in shaping market exchanges. Santiago engages in trans- and inter-disciplinary research to understand the impact of the restructuring of food systems on four different dimensions of sustainability: health and nutrition, social, economic and environmental.

25) Author: Sayoni Bose

Title: Authoritarian Populism and Collective Memory as Emancipatory Politics of Resistance around Land Acquisition in West Bengal

Abstract:

Recent rural studies are focusing on the alarming rise of authoritarian populism in many parts of the world and its impact on rural areas. However, attention must be paid towards the history of authoritarian populism in rural areas and resistance strategies against it. My project will engage with the politics of authoritarian populism in rural West Bengal, in eastern India, to show how the pernicious effects of this authoritarianism were resisted through the politics of collective memory around land. West Bengal's agrarian economy has been historically skewed by uneven concentration of land and stagnant agricultural production. When the Left Front communist government came to power in 1977, it implemented land reforms. The reforms redistributed land from the landlords to the landless, legalized sharecropper rights and strengthened rural local self-government. The reforms prevented the crisis in social reproduction of small farmers and established the hegemony of the communist government through the perception that it 'cared' for the poor. The success of the reforms permitted the communists, particularly one to establish a "party society" i.e. a society where the communist party subordinated all rural institutions. In 1991, the Indian economy neoliberalized and in 2005 the Special Economic Zones Act (SEZA) was passed that targeted fertile land to be acquired for industrialization, mining and real estate. The communists changed their developmental intervention around land and sought to acquire land on behalf of capital. They targeted fertile land in villages such as Singur and Nandigram to set up SEZs, using harmads or armed party cadres to quell resistance by farmers who refused to give up land. My project will explore how these imperious motives of a populist authoritarian government were overturned by using the collective memory of land reforms and past resistance against authoritarianism, as an ally to resist the acquisitions.

Biography:



I graduated from The Ohio State University with a PhD in Geography in 2015. I analyze the messiness of land acquisition politics in West Bengal, India, to reveal the multiple fissures and claims around land. I draw upon political economy, political ecology of development, poststructural approaches to governance and feminist theory of intersectionality to understand the same. I study the interactions of neoliberal capital, the Indian state and social difference (class, caste/ethnicity, gender) that shape the messy politics. I work at Governors State University in Chicago and as an assistant professor of non-western Geography and affiliated with Gender and Sexuality Studies.